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# Eilonwy's shifting representations of desire in Lloyd Alexander's Chronicles of Prydain : and How the whore and the young lover make (a) way for the Queen: a feminist analysis of Shakespeare's Cressida, Juliet and Cleopatra

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and

# How the Whore and the Young Lover Make (A) Way For the Queen: A Feminist Analysis of Shakespeare's Cressida, Juliet and Cleopatra

by

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# Eilonwy's Shifting Representations of Desire In Lloyd Alexander's Chronicles of Prydain

by Stefany Kramer

Abstract: The major female character in Lloyd Alexander's children's series The Chronicles of Prydain, Eilonwy, becomes more what boys desire in a potential female partner than what girls desire in a heroine. Using the psychoanalytic methods of Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Zizek, I examine why Eilonwy may have been desirable to boys growing up during the nineteen-sixties in America.

Throughout the Chronicles of Prydain, Lloyd Alexander's fantasy series for children inspired by the Welsh legends of the Mabinogi, Dallben, Alexander's wise, old patriarch/enchanter repeats one line to both the hero and the heroine of the series: there "comes a time when we must be more than what we are" (Alexander CL 18). Both hero and heroine, Taran and Eilonwy, are initially mystified by this statement. Princess Eilonwy is the first to speculate that the maxim might be a reference to her own process of growing into a woman. In The Castle of Llyr, the third chronicle of the series and the one which Alexander denotes as particularly the story of our heroine (though, if it's truly Eilonwy's story, we might question why she's absent from most of it), Eilonwy is carted off to Mona to master the fine points of being both a princess and a young lady. While at Mona, she is re-kidnapped by Achren {the evil enchantress and surrogate-mother from whom Eilonwy escaped in the first book), and taken to the ancestral seat of her foremothers' [queen]dom, Caer Colur. Having survived this ordeal by sacrificing her matrilineal birthright of magical abilities and destroying her ancestral home in order to save Prydain from Achren, Eilonwy closes the book with these comments: "Now I shall never be an enchantress. There's nothing left for me now except being a girl... One thing more I remembered at Caer Colur: Dallben's saying that there was a time when we must be more than what we are. Can it be that being a young lady is more important than

being an enchantress? Perhaps that's what he meant. I shall have to find out for myself... So I must be a young lady, whatever that may be that's any different from what I am" (Alexander CL 200).

I remember, when I was a girl, getting a real sinking feeling in my stomach when I read these final words of Eilonwy, so pointedly set in the book the author designated as particularly her story. Possessed with fantasies of becoming an enchantress myself, I was devastated that my hero had to sacrifice her birthright of magic in order to be not just "only" a girl, but that particularly odious cultural throwback to the 1950s, a "young lady." But Eilonwy's sacrifice makes sense, or, to be more precise, makes perfect patriarchal sense when we take into account the historical context in which she was written, the explosively divided 1960s in America. I will argue that Alexander wished to soothe male anxiety by preserving (in his fictional nation, Prydain) the fifties fantasy-vision of unified, male identity that was rapidly corroding in the face of sixties' social upheaval. Eilonwy's sacrifice of her magical powers in order to become first, a young lady, and then, the wife and queen of our young male hero, was the fantasy-woman Alexander conjured-up for young, white boys sitting at the historical brink of the second-wave of American feminism. I will further argue that fantasies of Eilonwy's willing sacrifice of her identity for the benefit of the man she loved could protect boys from the emerging

feminism's terrifying bid for female autonomy through female constructed paradigms of female identity and agency -- a bid that would necessarily de-stabilize patriarchal models of male identity and agency.

Psychoanalysis, particularly the work of Jacques Lacan, examines humans' desires for wholeness. It unravels how peoples' fantasies of identity and relationship either contribute to or detract from this desirable wholeness. Slavoj Zizek's reading of Lacan is particularly useful to my argument because it shows why Alexander needs to consistently subvert his construction of female magical power in Eilonwy: Eilonwy's decidedly anti-patriarchal, female-born power consistently disrupts the visions of wholeness -- of unified, patriarchal, cultural and personal identity -- Alexander creates for Taran and for Prydain.[1] Zizek, in The Sublime

[1] Zizek uses Lacan's Mirror-Phase to assert that the subject, both male and female, is, indeed, the "subject of a lack" (Laclau xii) -- a lack of unifying, cohesive substance at its core. The subject is precisely not a unified thing, as Descartes' Cogito supposed, but is the thing forever cut off from unity, which is made to desire a unified subjectivity, and thus a unified identity and agency (the realization of the Gestalt-inspired Ideal-I). The fantasy of unified subjectivity just might compensate the subject for the loss of, and thus exorcise its desire for, the Oceanic Union (the pre-Mirror-Phase state where the baby cannot distinguish itself as separate from its surroundings), a desire which would, if realized, necessarily dissolve any sense of separateness and subjectivity which the subject might possess. But this compensatory, unified subject is a fiction; as Lacan writes,"this form [the Gestalt-inspired Ideal-I] situates the agency of the ego in a fictional direction, which will always remain irreducible for the subject alone" (Lacan 2). The subject is always necessarily split -- torn between wanting to emulate an unattainable, unified subjectivity which stands as pure identity, and desiring the state of pure relationship,

Object of Ideology, writes of Lacan, "in the final years of Lacan's teaching we find a kind of universalization of the symptom: almost everything that is becomes in a way symptom, so that finally even woman is determined as the symptom of man" (Zizek 71).[2] Lacan's proclamation, as interpreted by Zizek, seems true of the women in the Chronicles of Prydain, particularly Eilonwy. Eilonwy is nearly the only woman in Prydain. And, despite the fact that the male characters think she talks too much, she's characterized as a woman of competence among a company of good, gentle, wise, strong, brave, and reputable men. But still, as an enchantress, Eilonwy retains a female, magical power potentially threatening to Prydain's men. All the major female characters in the series are enchantresses too, to a greater or lesser degree. And, to a similar greater or lesser degree, all of these female enchantresses terrify most of the male characters in the series. Like the Lacanian symptom that Zizek describes, these women are objects of fear for the men, particularly the evil Queen Achren, and the triad of Moirae-

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the state of Oceanic Union, where all desires were fulfilled, but where it couldn't fully enjoy that ultimate pleasure because it wasn't a perceiving, separate subject yet.

[2] As the split-subject focuses on desires for unified identity, its connection to the Oceanic Union gradually fades into a remnant stuck somewhere in the unconscious. The OU, which embodies the subject's desire for relationship, reappears in the conscious world only as a symbolically-coded symptom.

like hags, Ortho, Orddu and Orgoch.[3] Luckily for these older enchantresses, they're past their child-bearing worth to patriarchal Prydain, and so they are free, as Prince Gwydion tells the broken enchantress Achren at the end of The Castle of Llyr, to "[f]ind [their] own path" (Alexander CL 193). Eilonwy isn't so lucky.

Prydain needs her, not just to be the Queen that will provide the nation with an eventual heir to King Taran, but as the sole protectress of both patriarchal, cultural unity and unified male identity. To fulfill this necessary role, Eilonwy must "become more than what she is" by becoming less -- less strange, less powerful and, thus, less terrifying. She must give up her magical powers -- the locus of her powerful and terrifying feminine birthright -- in order to become the princess and "young lady" around which male pleasure-producing fantasies coalesce. She must give up her enchantress-identity to obscure the "materialization of the terrifying,impossible,[identity/dissolving] joissance" (Zizek 71), the symptom, as it's located in a realization of female identity through female-born magical power.[4] She must lose

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[3] Though just like the symptom they represent, which symbolizes the split-subject's desire to return to the identity-dissolving (thus, somewhat frightening) Oceanic Union, these female objects of fear are also desirable: Achren is frequently described as very beautiful, and the three hags turn into three beautiful maidens while they spin and weave.

[4] With the OU fading into this symptom, the split-subject continues to fantasize about becoming a whole self and takes great pleasure in these fantasies. Through symbolic

her identity so a vision of unified patriarchal, cultural identity, the vision of America threatened in the sixties, can emerge unhindered in Prydain.

Eilonwy's magical powers -- powers which "have been handed down to all daughters of the House of Llyr" (Alexander HK 281) -- most connote her connection to a particularly non-inferior female autonomy, agency, and identity. Autonomously-constructed female subjectivity, agency, and identity threaten the patriarchy with dissolution, and by extension, the dissolution of male subjectivity constructed through patriarchy. So, for the men whose identities are constructed through patriarchy, women become the symptom. They necessarily become associated with a potentially lethal relationship which, if it were realized, would blur the divisions essential to the very survival of patriarchy -- the divisions which define men as superior rulers and women as inferior subjects (Theweleit 61). These divisions are what constructs the totalizing vision of social wholeness, of

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interpolation, these pleasures construct the fiction of unified subjectivity reflected in the Gestalt, allowing the split-subject to experience agency and identity. These pleasures become the substance which assign "a minimum of consistency to [the split-subject's] being-in-the-world" (Zizek 75); pleasure becomes the substance around which subjectivity coalesces. Pleasure fills in the space of lack. In short, because of the illusion of unified identity and agency it creates, the symbolic interpolation of these pleasures transform the unsettling, identity-destroying symptom into a "signifying formation penetrated with enjoyment" (Zizek 75). Symptom exchanged for this enjoyment-filled "signifying formation," called a sinthome, performs the unifying compensation of wholeness for wholeness that could not occur during the Mirror-Stage.

unified culture, that is patriarchy, they must be retained in order to protect both the autonomy of patriarchy and the individual autonomies of the men constructed through patriarchy.

To strengthen these divisions, patriarchy assigns women cultural roles that, within patriarchy, are considered roles inferior to male roles. These cultural roles prevent women from developing their own vision of female identity while keeping male visions of male identity locked in place. Women being deprived of any identity other than what men give them is all part of the male pleasure-producing fantasies that construct unified male subjectivity through a unified, patriarchal culture. Inside patriarchy, women need to operate as those who are not what men are -- as the "others" who are inferior and should be controlled by men -- in order for men to experience pleasure, and thus, agency and identity through the patriarchy.

These cultural roles and meanings attached to women are the sinthome. The sinthome is what enables men to take pleasure from women through misrecognition: if women themselves are the terrifying, uncontrollable symptom, the roles patriarchy assigns them are sinthomes -- roles that enable men to overlook their "terror" of the "feminine" by defining women as easily controlled by men, as somehow less than men. Instead of being afraid of the potential, patriarchy-dissolving situation when women realize they can

make their own identities, identities that make them mens' equals, men delight in the inferior roles, the sinthomes, which patriarchy assigns women. This way, men get to feel good about themselves; they get to feel superior. Shortly, I'll explore how Alexander manifests the symptom in representations of female-born magic, how he diffuses the terror of this symptom by synthesizing Eilonwy into a pleasure-bearing sinthome around which male fantasies circulate, and what bearing Alexander's construction of Eilonwy has on the models of female and male identity he wishes to instill in the children that will become the post-sixties adults of America. First, a look at the historical period in which the Prydain books were written might be helpful in determining exactly what issues Alexander thought were at stake for post-sixties society.

In his article, "The Evolution of Tolkien Fandom," Phillip W. Helms writes about the general appeal of the fantasy-genre (particularly the appeal of J.R.R.Tolkien's fantasy series The Lord of the Rings) during the 1960s in America:

> The world was an unsettled place in those days. These were the times of the anti-war protests, of Kent State, of riots (racial and otherwise), of assassinations (Martin Luther King and John Kennedy), and of political madness. The American Dream was crumbling; even the college education which had been held out as a blank check in the 1950s no longer carried assurance of a job. American youth sought a refuge -- a system which was not morally grey, a system that would work the way it was supposed to...Upon this climate burst the rediscovery of a fine and decent place, a world of clearly defined good and evil with complacent, underachieving heroes -- Middle-earth. (Helms 105)

We could just as easily substitute Prydain in the quote above. Prydain is a world of clearly defined good and evil, right and wrong, and especially, friend and enemy. Like Helms's concept of Middle-Earth, Prydain possesses a vision of unified cultural wholeness where everybody either operates within the same cultural standards or is the "bad guy." But unlike Middle-earth, whose clearly defined social order apparently doesn't include women, Prydain seems to maintain a tenuous space for female agency, identity and power.

Alexander addresses his fantasy-adventure series to both girls and boys by making Eilonwy an active, interesting and major character (second only to the male hero). This decision problematizes conceptions of Prydain as a place that maintained the "Father-Knows-Best" fifties' fantasy of the "clearly defined," unanimously agreed upon and rigidly enforced, absolute cultural dualism that Helms claims for Tolkien's Middle-Earth. Within patriarchal fantasy, women, obviously, aren't allowed to be the men's equals. They are not allowed to occupy the role of autonomous agents of their destiny -- a role the American Dream, however "crumbling," virtually requires of American men, and a role both Taran (constantly) and Eilonwy (periodically) fill throughout the Alexander series. Indeed, Eowyn's brief (though exciting) claim to agency troubles Helm's vision of Middle-Earth as so

very "clearly defined."[5]

The vision of cultural wholeness Helms claims for Middle-Earth is fiction, but, nevertheless, a fiction not unfamiliar to Post-World War II America. During the sixties (during which Alexander wrote his series and Tolkien's books enjoyed a revived popularity), the simple, unified patriarchy (thus,"Father-Knows-Best") of fifties culture retreats into an idyllic past. But this past, just waiting to be opposed to the not-so-idyllic present, is simply a specular vision of the present's very own split-identity; laments over the passing age are laments over an age that never existed. There wasn't a cultural unity in America before the sixties, no moral and social consensus. The NAACP had been in existence since the early part of the century and, yes, there did exist a first-wave of American feminism -- they were called the suffragettes, and they got American women the vote in 1920. American cultural unity was a fiction. During the sixties, with the civil rights movement in full swing, Stonewall eminent, the Vietnam war upon us, and second-wave feminism on the horizon, it must have become very clear that the only thing "real" about those passing "enchanted" ages had nothing to do with clear divisions between good and evil and right and

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[5] Eowyn is the only woman who participates in warfare in Tolkien's Lord of the Rings trilogy. Like Eilonwy, she is a princess, daughter of Theoden, King of Rohan. Near the end of the series Eowyn disguises herself as a warrior, rides into battle, and avenges her father's death by slaying the evil Lord of the Nazgul.

wrong in America, but was more precisely about **who** drew that division, and thus, **who** created social definitions and cultural identity. This realization having been made, those previously left out of these decisions, most notably, women, gays and lesbians, minorities, and segments of the working-class, became more socially empowered to question them.

Alexander's female characters are both a reaction against and an elaboration of "othered" groups', particularly women's, increasing ability to articulate cultural dissent in America. Certainly, his bitingly negative characterization of Achren, and his need to reduce Eilonwy from the agent of female fantasies to the subject of male ones is his threatened response to minority groups' increasing ability to question the familiar cultural system from which he benefitted. But Eilonwy didn't start the series as simply a male fantasy, and Achren doesn't end simply or completely evil. The multi-valences of the female characters he constructs in Prydain reveal Alexander grappling with the de-centering, de-stabilizing cultural dissent he experienced in real life.

Eilonwy is more of what Alexander thinks sixties boys desire in women than what sixties girls desire in heroines. But, even so, Alexander's projected fantasies about the ideal woman, as they are constructed through Eilonwy, aren't necessarily in accord with patriarchally-correct conception of the perfectly subjugated woman submitting to a sterile, plastic male-controlled society that "works the way it's

supposed to." Eilonwy talks too much and remains too independent. And, throughout the series she continually resists traditional female roles. Complaining about her time spent at Mona "learning to be a young lady" (HK 11), Eilonwy describes castle life: "And if you think living in a castle is pleasant... I can tell you it isn't... sewing and weaving and curtsying and all such I don't even want to think about. I've not draw a sword for I don't know how long..."(HK 12). Eilonwy prefers the active warrior role that, within Prydain, makes her men's equal, hinting that maybe sixties American men didn't desire a submissive woman, but a similar equal partner.

However, this desire for an equally autonomous female partner remains deeply repressed within the text, hinted at only at the edges of Eilonwy's never-faltering defiance of patriarchally-constructed female roles. Her resistance spurs increasingly conservative reactions on the surface of the story: in The Book of Three, published in 1963, Eilonwy goes on adventures, uses her magical abilities, and fights alongside the men; in The High King, published in 1968, Eilonwy gives up everything she is to marry Taran. Alexander, clearly affected by women questioning the roles patriarchy assigns them, and their subsequent questioning of patriarchy itself, seems to be struggling with his own desires and feelings concerning women and their social roles. Eventually, however, his conservative side seems to score a victory; he

progressively restricts Eilonwy's resistance from an active participation in traditionally "masculine" warrior role to an active desire to fill those roles. Since going to Mona to learn the "sewing and weaving and curtseying" required of a young lady, Eilonwy can only wish to draw a sword. All her subsequent attempts at sword-play result in her needing rescuing. Thus, Alexander pushes us to realize that Eilonwy's desire to be a warrior is antithetical to her proper patriarchal place as the princess and young lady whose inability to defend herself necessarily requires the intervention of a male hero.

It's uncanny that Alexander makes Eilonwy a "Princess of the House of Llyr" because Branwen, daughter of Llyr, then becomes her ancestor, and the first in the line of the "daughters of the House of Llyr" to which so much enchantment is attributed in Prydain. Eilonwy and Branwen share a similar role in each of their respective texts. Both women are positioned so that they span across cultural divisions: Branwen is both a Welsh princess and an Irish Queen, who eventually gives birth to a potential future ruler of mixed cultural heritage; Eilonwy is a Princess in love with a commoner, whose magical powers group her with the passing "age of magic," but whose love relationship aligns her with the coming "age of man." Both women struggle to construct visions of cultural unity, of national wholeness, and thus, peace, out of division and separation.

Unfortunately, Branwen must die for the vision of national wholeness to be realized; the British will not survive unless this Irish Queen/Welsh Princess -- this remnant of assimilation -- is destroyed (along with her assimilationist brother, King Bran). Eilonwy lives because she's a product of her socially ambivalent time, the sixties in America. For the benefit of sixties children who, growing up in the sixties, might have varied responses to issues of cultural identity, Eilonwy must sacrifice her "self" in order to preserve a fiction of "Prydainian" unity in concord with the fiction of Post-World War II American identity -- which is, as I've said, precisely the vision of unified cultural identity, of cultural wholeness, that produced the moral divisions and social definitions that sixties political movements questioned. Women especially were beginning to question this American-Dream-inspired vision of patriarchally-constructed, unified American identity. They were beginning to resist the roles assigned to them, thus heralding the yet-to-be-realized complete collapse of patriarchy. And these women were precisely the group of people who had to be fully integrated into his vision in order for Alexander to fantasize patriarchal, cultural identity in Prydain.

Enter Eilonwy. Throughout the series, Eilonwy is allowed to play at being a hero. She gets to handle a sword. Indeed, she finds the famous blade that will eventually kill

both the deathless cauldron-born and the Death-Lord himself -- the blade that grants her lover, our hero, his ultimate identity as High King of Prydain. She even gets to experiment with magic, although, because she's taken from the only woman that can possibly educate her in magic, the enchantress Achren, or rather, because she is "rescued" from the "evil" enchantress Achren, she never learns how to use her magic. Just from this brief description we sense the ambiguity of Eilonwy's characterization. She is an active agent when she takes the great sword, but her act of agency establishes only Taran's identity, not her own. She experiments with a female magic so powerful that the Enchantress who wields it was once absolute ruler of Prydain, but, in this too, Eilonwy serves only to establish Taran's identity as her rescuer from the terrible, and terribly powerful, path down which her innate magical abilities might lead her. Eventually, Eilonwy will be transformed from a potentially terrifying, de-stabilizing, magical women into what men want her to be -- the princess and the young lady that engages their pleasures, fuels their agencies, and grants them their identities as the saviors of their people and rulers of their own and their people's lives. But just as their inability to defend South Vietnam forced men themselves into questioning their ability to preserve the safety of their land and people, and just as the Civil Rights and Feminist movements resisted the social and cultural

valences of absolute, white-male rulership, something of Eilonwy remains "leftover" within the text, just like the symptom that cannot be completely obscured within the sinthome (Zizek 75), questioning and resisting the validity of a male identity available only through the sacrifice of female agency.

In his preface to the third book, where he directly addresses the children reading the series, Alexander says that in The Castle of Llyr "what befalls the heroine is as important, and as perilous, as the hero's own quest" (Alexander CL 15), thereby differentiating the heroine's quest from the hero's and making its importance and danger only relevant in relation to the hero's quest. What Alexander doesn't say is, though Eilonwy's quest may be important only in how it contributes and complements "the hero's" quest, its contributions are absolutely necessary to Taran's search for his identity -- a search which is the central "quest," or theme of the Chronicles of Prydain: the poor and title-less but honest and perseverant hero struggles to create himself from nothing in order to achieve ultimate fulfillment and success. Alexander should have realized that this formula for prosperity wasn't as straightforward as it seems in a Horatio Alger novel. Taran lives the American Dream in the only place where it could conceivably exist during an era when the American men most like Taran, working-class men, were being shipped overseas to die in Vietnam: a

fantasy-world.

The Castle of Llyr is the book which Alexander designates as the "heroine's story," but Eilonwy disappears after the fourth chapter, to return only at the very end of the book, in the sixteenth chapter. In **her** book, Eilonwy becomes most important to the text by suddenly becoming very different from the male protagonist of the series, most noticeably in her absence from the textual space which demands the constant presence of Taran -- a textual space she had previously shared with Taran. Eilonwy's absence transforms her from an active member of the adventuring team, from not only the agent of her own actions, but an agent functioning in the same roles as our hero, into a love-object which the hero must rescue. Eilonwy's familiar role of princess-needing-saving engages Taran's agency. His subsequent successful rescue of her confirms his sense of identity as a hero, a savior, and protector -- as an autonomous man who could control his fate, protect his woman, and defend his way of life from foreign threat, rather than a man helpless and dependent on the whims of a morally ambiguous ruler or nation.

Eilonwy's transformation into a princess and young lady needing rescuing, which is, ostensibly, her "quest" in this book (or at least the outcome of her quest), is essential to Taran's quest for identity, but it is also an elaboration of how Alexander designates difference. Eilonwy's progression

through roles similar to our hero's in the first two books, to fill a role vastly different to the hero's by the third book is necessary to the fantasy of male identity Alexander spins: in order for Eilonwy to become the fantasy-woman around which male desire can coalesce, and male identity evolve, she must first be made different from men -- she must transform from a hero among heroes to a princess and young lady among warriors and kings. After all, Taran couldn't very well rescue someone who was completely capable of rescuing herself -- as Eilonwy clearly proved she was capable of doing in the first two books of the series (in fact, in The Book of Three it is Eilonwy who rescues Taran from his dungeon cell, not the other-way-round). Taran needs Eilonwy to suddenly need saving in order to activate the agency that grants him his identity as different from her, as different from women, as woman's protector, as the active agent of his fate, and as a member of the sex that patriarchy designates independent and capable enough to avoid requiring rescue. Of course the princess and young lady, by needing rescuing, becomes inherently less capable than men, more dependent on them, and therefore, inferior to them. But that's all part of the Alexander's patriarchal fantasy vision -- a fantasy that attempts to, but never completely obscures the "real" difference inscribed in Eilonwy.

Obviously what makes Eilonwy different from Taran is that she is a women, and thus, within patriarchal context,

that terrifying relationship-bearing, potentially destructive female entity. But that, in itself, isn't what's so threatening to Alexander's patriarchal utopia. Eilonwy's woman-ness can be taken care of; she can be transformed from woman into the fantasy young lady and princess that is completely in line with Alexander's and Taran's vision. The threat Eilonwy poses to Prydain's eminent patriarchy isn't just that she's a woman, it's that she is a woman who resists traditional female roles, and by doing so, clings to an identity different from roles patriarchy assigns her. It's Eilonwy's sameness to Taran through the first two books, her ability to fill the same role of hero, often more successfully than Taran, that threatens to de-stabilize Alexander's patriarchal fantasy-world, a world that relies on female difference to establish male identity. And what helps her resist being "feminized" by patriarchal forces: Female magic; the sense of identity imparted to Eilonwy through her heritage -- her place as a Sorceress in a long line of Prydain's most powerful Sorceresses. Female magic becomes the " leftover... kernel" (Zizek 75) of the symptom as it's located in Prydain's female magic-users, the part of the symptom that resists being "domesticated" (Zizek 71) into the pleasure-bearing, patriarchally-constructed sinthome of the inferior, dependent, fantasy-woman that is necessary to the construction of male identity in Prydain.

At the beginning of The Castle of Llyr, Eilonwy resists

being carted off to Mona in order to learn how to become a princess and a young lady. She laments, "I don't care about being a princess! And since I'm already a young lady, how else could I behave? That's like asking a fish how to learn how to swim!" (Alexander CL 18). Eilonwy thinks she already is what Dallben insists that she "must be more than." She is right. Because Eilonwy already has an identity; she already knows who she is. She is "Princess Eilonwy Daughter of Angharad Daughter of Regat of the Royal House of Llyr" (CL 17). Armed with this knowledge of her identity, despite the absence of these enchantress foremothers, she is fully confident and wise. She rarely makes the same mistakes as Taran, and she does the rescuing -- at least through the first and second books in the series and first four chapters of the third.

Eilonwy's identity is tied to magic from the very beginning of the series. As Prince Gwydion explains to Taran, Eilonwy "is the last princess of the House of Llyr," where "[f]or generations the daughters... were among the most skillful enchantresses in Prydain" (Alexander CL 157). Eilonwy herself tells Taran, when they first meet, that in the "House of Llyr" its sort of a "family tradition" that "girls are enchantresses" (Alexander BT 70). The magical powers, along with tools to use those powers (most notable Eilonwy's ever-present glowing ball, her bauble), are of a matrilineal sort -- they're passed down from mother to

daughter. In the first book of the series, The Book of Three, directly after the episode in which we meet Eilonwy, she finds an enchanted sword with ancient writing on the scabbard (the enchanted sword Drnwyn which is fated to slay the Death-Lord). Taran, who at the beginning of the series is still foolish and impulsive, wants to draw the sword. Eilonwy tells him, "I wouldn't dare to draw it, and I don't intend letting you, either. Besides it says only royal blood [can draw the sword] and doesn't mention a word about Assistant Pig-keepers" (Alexander BT 108). Eilonwy's early and correct assessment of the enchanted sword -- the sword nearly kills Taran when he tries to draw it -- proves that she has what it takes to become the enchantress of this matrilineal birthright. But it also marks magic as a sight of female agency, and particularly a sight of female agency that questions male authority, agency and identity.

Eilonwy refuses to let Taran draw Drynwyn, reminding him that he is "of no station in life" (Alexander HK 294), that he has no "royal blood," and so he really isn't capable of drawing the sword. This resonates for Taran, tapping into his great psychic trauma-- a trauma that stays with him until the end of the series, and almost prevents him from fulfilling his quest: Taran still thinks that identity is connected to birth. He is ashamed that he is "one of no station in life" (HK 294), that he doesn't even know his own parents. He thinks that not knowing his origin prevents him

from knowing himself. Eilonwy's magical abilities, descending through her royal line, from enchanted sword on, feed into Taran's insecurity and shame. Her status as princess/enchantress hinders him from his own quest of finding out who he really is, because if Taran finds out he's no prince, he doesn't feel he'll be worthy of wedding a royal enchantress. Eilonwy's female-wielded magical status is a threat to Taran's emerging identity. Her magic keeps her from assuming the complementary, inferior, "female" role through which Taran constructs the "superior" male role which compensates for his class anxiety: if Eilonwy would only give up her magic and become a proper young lady, Taran could reflect that though he's not rich, at least he's not a weak, helpless woman. Thus, from the beginning of the series, female magic threatens the emergence of the great patriarchal state over which Taran will eventually rule as High King of Prydain.

If women like Eilonwy "magically" start creating themselves, they disrupt the male identity-constructing pleasures infused in a patriarchy which assigns women the specific role of "other" -- of "non-identity." Two separate identities, coexisting as equals within the same space, is precisely the relationship that a totalizing vision of cultural "wholeness" -- like patriarchy -- cannot handle. As I've already indicated, when women start creating identities of their own, transcending the roles patriarchy assigns them,

patriarchy ceases to exist, and thus, so does the vision of unified male subjectivity that patriarchy fuels. Eilonwy's magical powers allow her to maintain this dangerous sense of female identity and agency. This site of female magic is problematic to Prydain's patriarchal world-view, and thus, must eventually be eliminated.

Nowhere is female magic's threat to Alexander's emerging patriarchal utopia more evident then in The Castle of Llyr. In this third book of the series, Eilonwy is taken to Mona to learn how to be a princess and a young lady. Before she starts her "education," she's kidnapped by Achren. Now, Achren, this evil queen of the series, is a perplexing character. She once ruled all of Prydain, and is, indeed, the person who taught the Death-Lord, Arawn, everything he knows. Alexander says that Arawn was once Achren's consort, but that he betrayed her, forced her out of her Queendom, and seized ruler-ship of Prydain for himself. Prince Gwydion reveals a particularly frightening segment of Achren's pre-Arawn rule in The Castle of Llyr. He recounts:

> The lore tells of your ancient rule... and how you sought to keep hearts and minds in thrall to you. You tormented those who would not worship you; and for those that bowed to you, life was a little better than a slow death. I know, too, of the blood sacrifices you demanded, and your joy at the cries of the victims. (Alexander CL 177)

In Prydain, subjects **serve** Arawn and the Sons of Don. Where they now **serve** these kings, they once **worshipped** Achren. Now, whatever you think about the viability of a mythic goddess-worshiping matriarchy and its worth to feminism in

questioning the origins of patriarchy, I don't think you can help but notice Alexander's utter horror at the concept. This little passage frightens me, not because of Achren's apparent blood-lust, but because it's such a blatant patriarchal bashing of a potential site of female power. And, indeed, this matriarchy over which Achren ruled must have been powerful, because her reoccurring attempts to regain her throne from its current male owner are much more threatening than her having had it in the first place; Gwydion, Dallben, and even Arawn suddenly keep a watchful eye on her. The dissolution of patriarchy that would occur if Achren regained the throne seems to be much more threatening than, and, indeed, linked to, the pre-patriarchal state in which she previously ruled.

Achren makes her last serious attempt at regaining Prydain's throne in The Castle of Llyr. What's so threatening about this particular attempt, however, is that, having lost most of her own magical powers, she attempts to gain the throne using Eilonwy's powers. Eilonwy, potential queen to Taran and heir-provider to the patriarchal state that so complete emerges when the "age of magic" passes into the age where "men unaided guide their own destiny" (Alexander HK 280), becomes a threat to that emerging male-rule. And she becomes a threat through that old familiar site of female-wielded magic.

At the end of the book, Eilonwy, while enchanted by

Achren, must make a choice: she must either destroy the matrilineal heritage of magic that is her birthright --she must destroy her own female identity -- or she must destroy the man she loves, Taran. The problem is that Achren has bewitched her so that she can't remember who Taran is or even that she loves him. But at the moment of truth, when she has the key to unlock all her power literally in her hands in the form of a book -- the "greatest treasure of the House of Llyr" (Alexander CL 156) -- where her foremothers magical secrets are written, she remembers her love for Taran. Consequently, just as she's at the brink of becoming a full-fledged enchantress, she uses her magical golden sphere, her bauble (an object that becomes much "more" than the toy/torch it had previously been), to destroy both the book, and the castle and, thus, every tie to her magical birthright of autonomous female identity, agency and power. Afterwards, Eilonwy explains:

> Achren cast a spell over me and I remember very little. Until the bauble was in my hands once more. Then -- then it was very strange. In the light of it, I could see all of you. Not with my eyes, really, but in my heart. I knew you wanted me to destroy the spells. And I wanted to, as much as you did...Yet, it was as though there were two of me. One did and one didn't want to give up the spells. I knew it was my only chance to become an enchantress, and if I gave up my powers then that would be the end of it. (Alexander CL 197)

Eilonwy is torn between relationship and identity. Faced with a decision resonant for the many American women who, for the first time, were widely and openly presented with the options of career or family, Eilonwy wants to achieve

autonomous female identity by becoming an enchantress. But she also wants to do what she "knows" her lover wants her to do, and, indeed, requires of her in order to become his lover -- which is, of course, to sacrifice her own desires for his.

Eilonwy chooses relationship. And by doing so, she gives up her magical powers -- her only chance at the autonomous female identity which, as symptom, so threatens patriarchy -- in order to become the young lady, princess and eventual wife/queen/mother sinthome that patriarchy requires of her. Eilonwy gives up her magic, her agency and her "self" for the love of a man. And ironically, by destroying both her own and Achren's last chance at magic, Eilonwy makes possible the emergence of a unified patriarchal culture, because when she destroys her spells, she destroys the last remnant of female magic that can possibly threaten male rulership in Prydain. As Prince Gwydion says to Eilonwy, "[f]or all you chose to sacrifice, you have kept Achren from ruling Prydain. We owe more than our lives to you" (Alexander CL 198) Well, Gywdion is right; the men of Prydain do owe more than their lives to Eilonwy -- they also owe their identities, their agencies, and their patriarchy to Eilonwy. So to answer the question poor Eilonwy asks at the very end of **her** book: Yes, Eilonwy, Dallben was right, in the patriarchal, fantasy world of Prydain it **is** much more important to be a young lady than it is to be an enchantress,

because young ladies, especially young ladies who sacrifice what they want for what their husband wants, are the fantasy-women that curb male anxiety. Young ladies keep men from worrying about how their identities and relationships will be affected as real-life women transform from the inferior beings who justify and define patriarchy into men's competition in the work-force.

As if that ordeal wasn't enough, Eilonwy must choose to give up her inborn magic identity again in the last book of the series, The High King. You see, "[a]t Caer Colur the Princess gave up only the usage of her magic" (Alexander HK 281); her magic, like the "leftover kernel" of the symptom, resists complete annihilation. And when the "age of magic" must pass to make way for the "age of man" in patriarchal Prydain (just as it must in Narnia and Middle-Earth), Eilonwy, because the blood of enchantresses runs through her, must sail away with it. Alexander's version of the Grey Havens to which Bilbo and Gandalf travel is called the Summer Country, and like the Grey Havens or Avalon, in the Summer Country one can never die. Taran is allowed to go along too, but in the end, he opts to stay and rule over the incoming "age of man" as the High King of Prydain. Eilonwy responds to her predicament by saying that it's "not fair" that she should be made to go to the Summer Country: she didn't ask to be "born into a family of enchantresses" (Alexander HK 301); she "didn't ask for magical powers" (301). Dallben asks her

if she truly wishes "to give up [her] heritage of enchantments" (301). Eilonwy answers, "Of course I do...If enchantments are what separate us, then I should be well rid of them!" (301). So Eilonwy gets to make a wish on her magic ring -- a ring that will grant "only the deepest wish of [her] own heart" (302). Consequently, a magical sort of dialysis occurs: Eilonwy turns the ring; it flares; she gives a little scream of pain; and all of sudden she's purged of all her enchantress blood.

Unlike the real-life women who could try to balance both identity and relationship, both their desires and the desires of their male partners, Eilonwy doesn't get to try it both ways. The text forces its fantasy, ideal woman to give up her autonomous identity completely by choosing to be the wife and mother that patriarchy wants her to be and not the enchantress who can resist patriarchal wishes. And what's worse, not only must she be complicitous in the destruction of her own identity, she must secretly want it destroyed. The eradication of her agency, her autonomy and her subjectivity must, indeed, be her very heart's desire. And "we didn't make her; she chose it" is all too quickly translated into "I didn't hurt her... she really wanted it." Sounds like the dialectic of rape to me, and like the fantasies constructed around the legitimization of patriarchy. With Alexander's rape-fantasy complete, Eilonwy can marry Taran and live happily-ever-after as the identity-

less wife and mother to the King and future Kings of patriarchal Prydain.

Well, maybe. Until we consider that Taran, in the final pages, must also make a sacrifice. Having been given the choice to stay in Prydain until his death, or journey to an ever-lasting paradise, he chooses to stay. Others of the companions are given no choice: responding to the sudden announcement that he must leave Prydain, Fflewdder Fflam announce that "[he] is quite content to stay in [his] own realm (HK 280). Chief Bard Taliesin responds, "It is not for you to choose, Son of Godo" (280). Here, that Taran is allowed to choose whether he stays may have been the most culturally resonant moment in the series for the children of working-class American men who, due to a "lack of station" similar to Taran's, were given no choice but to fight in Vietnam. Taran's ability to decide his destiny for himself restores a bit of the crumbling American Dream: his journey from Assistant Pig-Keeper to High King of Prydain revived a fading American faith in free will and self-reliance, reassuring young boys that "men unaided" could, indeed, still "guide their own destiny" (HK 281), that men could create their own identities through their actions, regardless of wealth or status.

And if we look a little closer at Taran's decision, we see his own struggles between identity and relationship. When Taliesin describes the Summer Country, he speaks of a

"fair land, fairer even than Prydain, where all heart's desires are granted" (HK 280). Like Lacan's description of the Oceanic Union, the Summer Country is place of pure pleasure, where all desires are recognized and satisfied. Taran's greatest desire is to marry Eilonwy. Knowing that she must travel to the Summer Country because she is an enchantress, he still chooses to remain in Prydain, letting his "deeds... shape his destiny" (HK 293). Here, Taran himself chooses identity over relationship, forsaking a paradise with Eilonwy for the nation and people who grant him his identity as their protector, ruler and High King.

In this light, Eilonwy's decision to give up her magical powers, and thus unaided, remain in Prydain to let her own deeds shape her life, could be seen as her choosing identity rather than forsaking it. As Eilonwy says, "[she] didn't ask for magical powers" (HK 301), she didn't ask to be "born into a family of enchantresses" (301). Her decision to remain in Prydain is one that lets her create an identity through her actions rather than having one forced upon her by birth. Eilonwy's decision to forsake her matrilineal heritage of magic (the relationship-bearing symptom) could be her bid for an agency and identity-granting autonomy equal to Taran's. And yes, here the male desire for an equal female partner, seemingly repressed within the text throughout the series, returns through the other most ambiguous aspect of Eilonwy's character (besides her magic): her language still resists a

complete sacrifice of her agency.

As I said at the beginning of my analysis, Eilonwy talks all the time, marking speech as a site of female agency in the series. However, her male companions, Taran in particular, often criticize her for talking too much, marking female agency as something desirable only in small doses. In this case, male desires are disregarded; Eilonwy doesn't suddenly become silent after she gives up her magic. The amount and tone of her language remains unaltered even after she wishes away her heritage of enchantment. What she says is telling: when Taran hesitates before walking out to greet his subjects for the first time, fearing that he doesn't have what it takes to be King, that ruling Prydain will be as painful and difficult as when he "jumped headfirst into a thornbush" (HK 303), Eilonwy says that it will "[v]ery likely be more nettlesome.. but should you have any difficulties, I'll be happy to give you my advice. Right now, there's only one question: Are you going in or out of this doorway ? "(HK 303). In reply, Taran takes her hand and they walk out through the doorway together. Eilonwy, seemingly eager to begin their rule as King and Queen of Prydain prods Taran out the door by assuring him that their **partnership** will carry them through difficulties. With this, the series ends. Eilonwy's matter-of-fact, boisterous language, often scorned by Taran, now gives him the confidence to initiate their rulership, implying that Taran and Eilonwy will rule together

as they walk out together, side-by-side.

Despite this end of the series, I still think Alexander's Eilonwy, and his male characters' responses to her, represent an ambiguous, but decidedly sexist response to women's attempts to gain a degree of real social power during the sixties and seventies. I don't know how Alexander felt about women's roles in culture, but the ambiguity of Eilonwy's shifting roles in Prydain -- from warrior, to young lady, to enchantress, to Queen, and back again -- suggests that Alexander himself shifted on the issue. I am certain, however, that Eilonwy has very little to do with fueling young girl's emerging sense of agency and identity and almost everything to do with engaging young boy's desires (and, perhaps, men's desires as well). Eilonwy is purely a male fantasy: she is a woman willing to deny her foremothers and refuse her birthright, to give up her matrilineally-bestowed identity, plus the chance for eternal life in paradise, all for the sake of the man she loves and **his** needs and **his** desires, and yet, having given all this up, Alexander still depicts her as an equal partner in her relationship with Taran? No real woman should have to make such sacrifices to participate in such a lopsided "partnership", nor would she really be in a partnership if she had to continually make the biggest compromises. Eilonwy is Alexander's vision of resolving women's changing cultural roles completely in men's favor. I'm not suggesting that male fantasy, in itself, is

a bad thing, but Alexander suggests that women cannot escape becoming this fantasy when he dedicates the _High King_ "[to the] girls who will always be Eilonwy" (HK). That women must eternally submit to the desires of men, without recourse on their part, is just a figment in the machinery of Alexander's fantasy teleology.

# How the Whore and the Young Lover Make (A) Way For the Queen: A Feminist Analysis of Shakespeare's Cressida, Juliet and Cleopatra

by Stefany Kramer

Abstract: Shakespeare's Cressida, Juliet, and Cleopatra are very different women in very different situations. Yet the male characters in their plays treat them similarly. The male characters regard women as their possessions, chastising them for trying to exert control over their bodies and their identities. I examine how each of these women negotiate the patriarchal limitations placed upon them.

Shakespeare's Greece and Troy, Verona, and Rome as they are portrayed, respectively, in Troilus and Cressida, Romeo and Juliet, and Antony and Cleopatra reflect the patriarchal, proto-capitalist, agrarian, oligarchical nation in which he lived. Within this economic system, where private ownership of property by an elite, male upper-class was supported and free trade sanctioned, female sexuality, female reproductive capabilities, and women themselves were commodified. Like any commodity, women -- especially upper-class women -- were bought, bartered, sold, prized, guarded and hoarded as the valuable possessions of their male owners. Men exerted complete control over their female property, justifying their created economic superiority over women (patriarchy insured that only men could own land, and thus, the means of production) by suggesting that women were biologically determined to be "naturally" inferior to men. Many of the male characters in the aforementioned plays treat women as commodities -- as private possessions that can be bought, bartered, sold, prized, guarded, "whored-ed," or, indeed, disposed of in any way that suits the needs of the patriarch-headed family (as in Romeo and Juliet), and/or the patriarchal state (as in Troilus and Cressida and Antony and Cleopatra).

Commodified and controlled by this economically-based patriarchy, women, ostensibly, have little or no autonomy; they cannot make independent choices as to how they wish to

live, but must take orders from their male "masters." Freidrich Engels, in his book The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and The State, explains why women are commodified within proto-capitalist, agrarian, oligarchical economic systems: men rule because they control the economy, specifically, the means of production (Engels 117). In Engels' example, individual men owned vast amounts of land from which, through the raising and selling of crops and livestock (and the subsequent exploitation of the peasants that farmed the land) "valuable socioeconomic good(s)" were produced (Tong 48). Realizing that they could accumulate wealth through buying and selling of goods produced from their land, landowning men became preoccupied with what happened to the land after they died. This preoccupation with patrilineage constructed the monogamous family unit as a socio-economic paradigm that gave husbands complete control over their wives.

Rosemarie Tong explains in her book Feminist Thought/ A Comprehensive Introduction:

> Because women give birth, the mother of any child is always known. However, the identity of the father is never certain because a woman could have been impregnated by a man other than her husband. To secure wives' marital fidelity, men seek to impose an institution of compulsory monogamy on women...Thus, according to Engels, the sole purpose of the institution of monogamy is to serve as a vehicle for the orderly transfer of a father's private property to his children. Male dominance, first in the form of patrilineage and then of patriarchy, is simply the result of the class division between the propertied man and the propertyless woman. (49)

For Engels, Tong explains, propertied men commodify women

when they utilize the institution of the monogamous family in order to insure proper descent of their property, whether that property is the land of proto-capitalist nations, or the money and possessions of the later fully capitalist eras.

A by-product of this patrilineage-fervor is that, by placing so much value on female virginity, chastity and fidelity in the production of legitimate property heirs, men turn women into incredibly valuable possessions. Female sexuality and female reproductive capabilities, especially upper-class women's sexuality and reproductive capacities, become "fetishized" commodities -- commodities that are valued all the more because they are so strictly controlled (Tong 45). As the law of supply and demand dictates, "fetishized" items become all the more desirable precisely because they are somehow limited or prohibited, making women further in need of male protection to keep them from being preyed upon by the unscrupulous and lustful. As the dependents and possessions of men, women were subject to patriarchally constructed paradigms of female behavior -- paradigms which included female obedience and deference to men's wishes.

Barbara B. Diefendorf, in her article "Family Culture, Renaissance Culture," pushes Engels' patriarchal nuclear family paradigm back to Shakespeare's England, asserting that "between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, the family gradually retreated from the promiscuous sociability of the

Middle Ages to the privacy of conjugal domesticity" (Diefendorf 662), and that "extended versus nuclear families... were basically a rural phenomenon, if they existed at all, by the fifteenth century" (Diefendorf 666). Within these upper-class, nuclear families, women were regarded as possessions of their fathers and husbands. Daughters of aristocrats and the rising professional class often could not choose whom they would marry. Diefendorf explains that arranged marriages were "commonly found among the London-born daughters of gentlemen or wealthy tradesmen" (Diefendorf 669), and that they "(were) characterized by the joining of relatively young brides (20-24 years) with men four to seven years their senior"(Diefendorf 669). Thus, through giving their daughters (according to Engels' paradigm) to the men they most approved of, fathers could control the descent of their non-human property.

Despite, or perhaps, because of the suffocating oppression of women during the period in which Shakespeare's plays were written, some of his women characters recognize that exploiting their commodity value is a way and, indeed, the only way they can negotiate a quasi-autonomous space for themselves within the confines of strict patriarchal boundaries. Troilus and Cressida's Cressida is a good example of a women who recognizes her value as a commodity within her culture, and barters her sexuality to regain a sense of control over her life.

In Troilus and Cressida both Greece and Troy place great value, though not particularly on the bourgeois family structure, on a strict patriarchal order defining female inferiority as obvious and natural, and female monogamy, at least for the upper-classes, as important. Ulysses asserts that the conditions of patriarchal rule, hierarchy in particular, prevent the destruction of Greek civilization; hierarchical order prevents political and social chaos. Ulysses warns the Greek Council that a transgression of this order will unleash "raging of the sea, shaking of earth,/ Commotion in the winds, frights, changes, horrors" (1.3.97-98), in short, global turmoil. Agamemnon differs from Ulysses only in his suggestion that chaotic events are part of the absolute order ordained by those at the top of the hierarchical chain, the gods. As Gregory Bredbeck remarks in his book Sodomy and Interpretation: Marlowe to Milton, "Agamemnon speaks a language of absolute order, one in which seemingly gratuitous "checks and disasters" are, like knots in a pine, part of a divine design" (40).

Ulysses doesn't buy Agamemnon's explanation. Initially he describes a divinely-decreed hierarchical order:

> The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre
> Observe degree, priority, and place,
> Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,
> Office, and custom, in all line of order.
> (1.3.85-88)

Ulysses's rhetoric betrays him, however, when he prefaces this description of divine order with the statement "Degree

being vizarded,/ Th'unworthiest shows as fairly in the mask (1.3.84).

Ulysses doesn't accept Agamemnon's explanation that the "vizarding" of order is just part of divine design: for Ulysses, humans, not gods, are "vizarding" his order. Bredbeck writes:

> Ulysses' formulation seems to imply that order is a function of men's will to have it exist. As he says, "Degree being, vizarded/ Th'unworthiest shows fairly in the mask" (1.3.84).Implicit in this statement is a hidden problem of agency: who does the vizarding?... Does hierarchy inscribe men, or do men inscribe hierarchy -- is order a matter of precept or of praxis? (42-43)

Ulysses's language confirms that breach of order is an aberration and a direct affront, not to divine design, but to humanly-constructed patriarchal hierarchy.

To Ulysses, Cressida's language is an affront to the strict, patriarchal hierarchy he's desperate to preserve. Cressida's wit radiates on her arrival at the Greek war camp. She so cleverly rebuffs Menelaus's request for a kiss, he replies that her witty rhetoric "fillip me o'th' head" (4.5.45). After Cressida's similar rebuff to Ulysses, wise, old Nestor remarks that she is "[a] woman of quick sense" (4.5.54). Ulysses may agree with Nestor, but he doesn't think women with "quick senses" are necessarily a good thing, especially when they employ their wit to make powerful men like him look foolish in front of his peers (Agamemnon, Nestor) and especially his inferiors (Achilles, Patroclus). Ulysses replies to Nestor:

> Fie, fie upon her!
> There's language in her eye, her cheek, her lip,
> Nay, her foot speaks; her wanton spirit looks out
> At every joint and motive of her body.
> O, these encounters, so glib of tongue,
> That give accosting welcome ere it comes
> (4.5.55-59)

Ulysses, as did renaissance culture, associates Cressida's witty speech with excessive sexuality; her open mouth must mean she has an open body (Stallybrass). Both of these attributes, in a patriarchal, hierarchical culture, defy the strict monogamy and public deference to men required of an upper-class woman like Cressida.

Seeing how potentially disruptive the sexuality inferred from Cressida's language is to her culture, we might begin to think her actual non-monogamy, for it can't be called adultery since she isn't married to Troilus, is a class and patriarchy-busting, revolutionary venture. **Her** assertion of control over her sexuality threatens **patriarchy's** ability to control her sexuality, thus jeopardizing Ulysses's vision of a social order controlled by men, not gods, and definitely not women, and it allows men to comfortable type her; they know about "daughters of the game," women ruled by their sensual nature. She confirms their sense of her inferiority. However, Cressida's sexual transgression, her betrayal of Troilus for Diomedes, isn't performed strictly under her own volition, but within a range of very limited choice.

Cressida, like the upper-class female contemporaries of Shakespeare, is limited by "pre-capitalist social relations"

that signify a "double subordination of women to their husbands as well as to the prince (the state)" (Hodgdon 256): within the patriarchally-constructed hierarchy, women must answer to their nearest male relations, who, in turn, must answer to the leaders of their nation. Cressida is a noblewoman bartered away by her country to her father without so much as an eye-blink, much less outcry, from her lover. Among the Greeks, who view her as the property of her father, her choice of action is limited. Finding herself in a similar situation to Juliet after Romeo's banishment and her father's subsequent bartering of her to Paris -- exchanged between men and denied her lover -- she simply listens to the advice Juliet ignored. Juliet's nurse expounds on the situation:

> Romeo is banished; and all the world nothing
> That he dares ne'er to come back to challenge you;
> Or if he do, it needs must be by stealth.
> Then, since the case so stands as now it doth,
> I think it best you marry with the County.
> (3.5.215-219)

Juliet's nurse, had she been speaking to Cressida, might well have added "since you're in a Greek war camp with no other women in sight, since an entire line-up of Greece's top men have passed you around to receive their unsolicited kisses upon your arrival at the camp (4.4.17-52), and since Troilus gave you up so easily, you might want to 'align' with Diomedes purely for your own protection."

Cressida, from firsthand knowledge of the Helen situation, recognizes her own status as a commodity, and

perhaps realizes she is less valuable than Helen because she is so willingly bartered away. She certainly recognizes that she must shake free of father and family ties, ties that confirm her status as property within a patriarchal, hierarchical order, to freely choose her lover. When she realizes that she will be traded to the Greeks in exchange for Antenor, she says:

> I will not (go), uncle. I have forgot my father;
> I know no touch of consanguinity --
> No kin, no love, no blood, no soul so near me
> As the sweet Troilus...
> (4.2.95-98)

Realizing that she cannot resist the patriarchal will that prevents her from choosing a lover, that she cannot defy the wishes of either her country or her father, Cressida simply takes Juliet's nurse's advice. She makes the best of a bad situation and re-directs her love interests. Indeed, Cressida's love re-alignment seems even more astute when we recognize that Troilus's love may not be genuine, unlike Romeo's for Juliet.

Troilus is no Romeo. Early in the play, he transforms women into possessions when he says, in support of the Trojans keeping Helen, "We turn not back the silks upon the merchant/ when we have soiled them, nor the remainder viands/ We do not throw away in unrespective seive/ Because we are now full" (2.2.69-72). By comparing Helen to both dirty cloth and garbage, Troilus objectifies women and commodifies female sexuality (dirty silk isn't worth as much unspoiled

cloth). Just as Engels suggests, Troilus, by living in a society that prizes female monogamy, begins to regard Cressida's sexuality as a valuable, personal possession -- a possession that he is loath to bequeath to Diomedes. Troilus submits to the bartering of his property only because it is the will of a force higher in the hierarchical chain, the state.

Cressida's situation as a bartered and abandoned commodity in enemy territory is difficult to negotiate. What prevents her non-monogamy from being a revolutionary act is that Cressida's political savvy in exploiting her sexuality, her "acquiescence in her own oppression" (Tiffany 44), reinforces her status as a commodity and does nothing to alter her social environment. Early in the play, Cressida explains the measures women take to defend themselves from patriarchal exploitation. When her uncle Pandarus chides her for not disclosing her true feelings for Troilus, saying "You are such a woman a man knows not/ at what ward you lie" (1.2.245-246), Cressida replies:

> Upon my back, to defend my belly; upon my wit, to defend my wiles; upon my secrecy, to defend mine honesty; my mask, to defend my beauty...
> (1.2.247-249)

Realizing that women are valued only for their "belly (sexuality)," "honesty (virtue)," and "beauty," Cressida must constantly guard her most valuable assets, or watch her market-value decrease. Grace Tiffany says in her article "Not Saying No: Female Self-Erasure in Troilus and Cressida,"

Cressida, through her "voluntary sacrifice of independent self-expression," and, I would add, personal integrity, "authorizes her own displacement, affirming the erection of a male-authored (patriarchy-authored) 'Cressida'" (Tiffany 45). Cressida recognizes the extent to which women are exploited within patriarchal society and decides to "buy" into the system anyway. Her acquiescence doesn't stop the Greeks or Trojans from seeing women as male possessions. I can't completely condemn her, however, because, upon her arrival at the Greek war camp, she initially tried to employ a different, non-exploitative tactic to protect herself: cold, unmoving abstinence. Her refusal to obediently surrender to the Greek leaders' kisses, especially Ulysses's, and her subsequent rebuff of those kisses, not only failed to protect her, but made her a terrible enemy. Ulysses sets up a catch-22 for Cressida: if she allows kisses easily, she's a whore, and therefore, an aberration from patriarchal order, but if she rebuffs those same kisses, asserting her will against male will, she's a disobedient, outspoken, brash woman, which, by renaissance convention, means she's an aberrant whore.

Certainly the love-choice is not available for Cressida as it was for Juliet; she and Troilus don't have a "Romeo and Juliet" kind of love, but if she really has no other choice but to acquiesce to patriarchal control and sell her sex in order to insure her safety, then her situation, mirroring the

general tone of the play by its end, is incredibly bleak. Cressida is in the unfortunate position of being an intelligent and outspoken woman during a period of time when, since patriarchal order is threatened, it is all the more strictly enforced.

Romeo and Juliet's Juliet is bound by patriarchal exigencies similar to Cressida's. The choices she makes in response to her sexual subjugation and commodification are radically different from Cressida's choices, but Juliet's situation differs greatly from Cressida's. Unlike Cressida's father Calchas, who has "left (his) possession" (3.3.5) in abandoning Troy, Juliet's father is still a property-owner. Juliet's father is the " great rich Capulet" (1.2.81), master of a household and many servants. Since the houses of Montague and Capulet are "both alike in dignity" (1.1.1), we can assume that Montague is also a wealthy man and master of a household. Both Montague and Capulet were the heads, literally the patriarchs, of property-owning families, and as such were "regarded as no more than...temporary custodian(s) of the family estates, which were the permanent assets of the lineage...under which the bulk of them passed to the eldest son by convention of primogeniture" (Stone 71). Juliet, like Cressida, lives in a social system where women are commodified because of their importance to primogeniture. But unlike Cressida, whose father's treachery, by disenfranchising her family, made her patrilineal worth a

moot point, Juliet's marriage is still vital to Capulet patrilineage. Juliet is Capulet's only heir because "Earth hath swallowed all my (Capulet's) hopes but she" (1.2.14); his other children were either killed in an earthquake, or they died young and were buried. Capulet confirms at least a latent concern with patrilineage when, believing the sleeping Juliet dead, he says to Paris, the man he chose as Juliet's husband and his eventual heir:

> Death is my son-in-law, Death is my heir;
> My daughter he hath wedded. I will die
> And leave him all. Life, living, all is Death's.
>
> (4.5.39-41)

I'm not suggesting that Capulet's interest in whom Juliet marries is purely capitalistic, or even primarily financial, but he has at least entertained thoughts of Juliet's importance to the eventual distribution of his wealth.

Stephen Hanneford, in his article "'My Money Is My Daughter'"/ Sexual and Financial Possession in English Renaissance Comedy," outlines a three character structure common to renaissance comedies. The characters within this structure are a young woman, her would-be lover, and a rich older man, "a domestic tyrant, who is either married to a young wife, guardian of the young woman (whom he might intend to marry himself) or father/uncle to the daughter whom he plans to marry off according to his own narrow designs" (Hanneford 95). Surprisingly, given that it's a tragedy, Romeo and Juliet shares these three characters with the

comedies. Certainly Capulet is no Volpone or Shylock (though he's easily a domestic tyrant in act four). He expresses great affection for his daughter by not forcing her into an early marriage: despite County Paris's obvious wealth and status as kinsman of the Prince, Capulet doesn't initially force Juliet into this most prestigious match, but wishes her to select her husband from "within her scope of choice" (1.2.18). Hanneford's three-character structure seemed really applicable to Romeo and Juliet, however, when I realized that Capulet is a developed character, while we almost never see Montague. But maybe Montague's absence isn't so remarkable: while Montague could forbid Romeo's marrying Juliet, even disinheriting him, he couldn't have claimed Romeo as **his** in the same way that renaissance "middle-class fathers" regarded their daughters as possessions and "their daughter's chastity in terms of commodity" (Hanneford 99). Certainly, we must examine whom Capulet would allow within Juliet's "scope of choice." Obviously a man of "lower estate or degree" (Stone 71) than Juliet would fall outside her range, but how might Capulet react to Juliet's choosing Romeo Montague, who meets the class requirement of a would-be suitor, but is the only son of Capulet's sworn enemy?

Stone explains that "(m)arriage among the property-owning classes in sixteenth-century England was ... a collective decision of family and kin, not an individual one"

(Stone 70). Stone further explains that, provided it was properly sanctioned by the respective sets of parents, marriage for power, interest and property was more highly regarded than marriage for romantic love during the sixteenth-century. He says, "romantic love and lust were strongly condemned as ephemeral and irrational grounds for marriage" (Stone 70). Stone continues:

> To an Elizabethan audience the tragedy of Romeo and Juliet, like that of Othello, lay not so much in their ill-starred romance as in the way they brought destruction upon themselves by violating the norms of society in which they lived, which in the former case meant strict filial obedience and loyalty to the traditional friendships and enemies of the lineage.
>
> (Stone 70)

So, the problem with Romeo and Juliet isn't that theirs is not a good financial match, but that -- in loving -- Romeo, and especially Juliet, are breaching the patriarchal, hierarchical order which forces them to obey their fathers above every wish of their own. Indeed, at our first meeting with Juliet, when Lady Capulet introduces the idea of Juliet's marrying Paris, Juliet is the very picture of "filial obedience." Juliet tells her mother that "no more deep will I endart mine eye/ Than your consent gives it strength to fly" (1.3.98-99) -- that she will consider loving Paris only so long as her parents approve of the match. Similarly, when she falls in love with Romeo, Juliet recognizes the seriousness of her defecting from "loyalty to traditional friendships and enemies" of the Capulet household

when she says "My only love sprung from my only hate!/ Too early seen unknown, and known too late!/ Prodigous birth of love it is to me/ That I must love a loathed enemy" (1.5.138-141).

If Juliet had any doubts about her absolute subjugation to her father and the seriousness of defying her father, Capulet dispels them when he says, "An you be mine, I'll give you to my friend;/ An you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets" (3.5.193-194). This sort of fatherly language and behavior must have been strange to Juliet in light of Capulet's prior behavior toward her. He'd previously doted on her, calling her the "hopeful lady of [his] earth" (1.1.15). And Capulet certainly isn't thinking of personal gain when he asks Paris to "Let two more summers wither in their pride/ Ere we may think her [Juliet] ripe to be a bride" (1.2.10-11), fearing that women who marry and have children too young are somehow "marred" by being "so early made" (1.2.13) mothers. Juliet surely never thought this same generous father would say to her, "you shall not house with me" (3.5.190), or "I'll never acknowledge thee,/ Nor what is mine shall never do thee good (3.5.193-194) -- the Shakespearian equivalent of "I'm kicking you out and cutting you off." Likewise, she probably never realized how completely dependent she was on her father's will until he threatened to throw her out if she didn't "get thee to a church on Thursday" (3.5.162) and marry as her father wished.

What could work such a quick and drastic change on Capulet? Clearly, in the scene of Juliet's filial disobedience, Capulet becomes the senex of the comedies, a full-fledged domestic tyrant. The slightest disobedience from Juliet, his daughter, triggers such a change in Capulet that we can scarcely recognize the man that, only a few acts earlier, obligingly allowed his worst enemy's son admittance to his party, uninvited, telling his hot-blooded nephew to "let him [Romeo] alone" (1.4.65). Neither can we believe that the man who told Paris "My will to [Juliet's] consent [to marry] is but a part" (1.2.17) would balk so at her refusing her consent. Nurse thinks Capulet has gone overboard in his discipline of Juliet, and even Lady Capulet, who is also very angry with her daughter, advises her husband to cool his temper, telling him "You are too hot" (3.5.76). Capulet's rage indicates that whatever Juliet's "scope of choice" may include, disobeying her father isn't an option.

Capulet falls prey to a backlash fervor similar to Ulysses's. When Juliet disobeys him, Capulet sees his patriarchal power (literally) being threatened. Seeing his power crumbling, he becomes much more conscious of the domestic rights reserved for a patriarch: Capulet sees no need to treat Juliet as a possession until she refuses to act like one. Then he falls back on the language of the commodity, the language of female possession and dependence, because he knows he can. Juliet, like the women of the

culture in which she was created, was considered the possession of her nearest male relative (Hanneford 99). Like Cressida, she falls victim to a patriarchal need to reassert control over an increasingly defiant human portion of his property.

By choosing to love Romeo despite her father's wishes, Juliet resists her father's attempts to treat her as a possession, a commodity to be bought and sold between Verona noblemen. She realizes she must shake off her patriarchal bonds; she must "Deny (her) father, and refuse (her) name" (2.2.34), she must "no longer be a Capulet" (2.2.36), in order to be with Romeo. Juliet suspects their relationship cannot exist in a society where marriage has little to do with love and much to do with patriarchal approval (Tong 47). She realizes, in complete agreement with Engels, that the type of love she feels for Romeo may not be viable or expressible in a society, like Verona, where love is weighted by socio-political and economic conditions, and the power to control those conditions remains completely in the hands of wealthy men. In view of this, it is paradoxical, and perhaps a self-conscious decision on Juliet's part, that she evokes commodity-rich language when she tells Romeo that the love she feels for him cannot be expressed in language:

> Conceit, more rich in matter than in words,
> Brags of his substance, not of ornament.
> They are but true beggars that can count their worth;
> But my true love is grown to such excess
> I cannot sum up sum of half my wealth.

(2.5.30-34)

Juliet uses the language of wealth ironically. She tells Romeo that, in view of the great love she feels for him, love for which she would defy Verona's patriarchal codes of filial obedience, it's silly to commodify their relationship (and each other) by assigning their love a quantitative value. Unlike Cressida, Juliet absolutely refuses to buy into the social practices of her oppressors.

Juliet's defiance in choosing to love Romeo, and, indeed, in choosing to die for that love, becomes the revolutionary act that Cressida's failure to be monogamous was not. Juliet's death as the final one in a series, completely alters her society -- at least for the space of one generation. For all of Capulet's worry about whom Juliet would marry, her obedience, and implicitly (though never explicitly stated), who would inherit his property, Juliet's death leaves no one to inherit the Capulet estate. Indeed, with the deaths of Mercutio, County Paris, Tybalt, Romeo, and Juliet, an entire generation of property heirs has been annihilated. Thus, the patriarchal, patrilineage-based society of Verona should be de-stabilized for some time to come. Juliet's death also demonstrates the Engelian maxim that romantic-based love cannot exist within patriarchal, class-based societies, where the woman is considered a possession dependent on her nearest male relative's will. Romeo and Juliet realize that patriarchal, cultural codes

prevent their love from being realized in their world, so they choose to go on to the next.

Whereas Juliet's desire for Romeo empowers her, helping her to defy the patriarchal subjugation that commodifies her, Cleopatra's desire's "moral status," as Catherine Belsey states in her article "The Name of the Rose in Romeo and Juliet," "may be profoundly ambiguous" (Belsey 129); throughout most of the play we can't quite be sure if Cleopatra truly loves Antony, or if she's exploiting him for her political purposes. But can we really hold Cleopatra to the same moral yard-stick with which we measure either Juliet's or Cressida's actions? After all, Cleopatra, as Queen of Egypt, has more to worry about than love-affairs, family feuds, or her personal safety; she has a nation's best interests to look after.

As queen, Cleopatra is certainly an upper-class woman, but unlike her two female, upper-class counterparts, Juliet and Cressida, she maintains political and social autonomy both in and out of the domestic sphere. Cleopatra is not oppressed by patriarchal cultural codes because she doesn't live in a patriarchy. Indeed, Egypt and the Egyptians seem perfectly content being ruled by a woman. In fact, Cleopatra's people adore her. As Enobarbus reports to Maecenas and Agrippa, when Cleopatra appeared to Antony in her royal barge, "The city cast/ Her people out upon her;/ and Antony,/ Enthroned i' th' market place, did sit alone"

(2.2.214-216); the Egyptian people flock to their queen when she appears, leaving the powerful Roman warlord alone in their rush to see Cleopatra. Cleopatra herself claims the status not simply of royal queen, but of political "president of [her] kingdom" (3.7. 17), even to the point of leading Egypt into battle.

The Egyptians should be content with their leader: they are not simply ruled, but ruled well by Cleopatra. In an age when Rome strategically conquered all the territories around her, Cleopatra keeps Egypt's land mass and its unique culture from being colonized by the Romans, even adding the territories of "lower Cyria, Cyprus" and "Lydia" (3.6.10) to her queendom through her relationship with Antony. Compare Cleopatra's feat with the near eclipse of many cultures under Roman colonization, and we gain further respect for the political acumen of the queen. Certainly a similar queen's, Titus Andronicus's Tamora's, encounter with Rome did nothing for either the culture or the country of the Goths.

Cleopatra, as ruler of a nation whose social and cultural order is severely threatened, shares a similar position, ironically, with both Ulysses and Capulet. Seeing a Roman threat invade her kingdom, Cleopatra does everything possible to maintain control. She throws aside any personal interests, to focus on seducing, and thus controlling, no less than three great Roman leaders, and even bearing their children. Cleopatra muses over her successful seductions

after Antony has left Egypt for Rome, addressing her former lover, Julius Caesar:

> Broad-fronted Caesar,
> When thou was here above the ground, I was
> A morsel for a monarch; and great Pompey
> Would stand and make his eyes grow in my brow;
> There would he anchor his aspect, and die
> With looking on his life.
> (1.5.29-34)

Trying to deduce whether Cleopatra really loved Pompey, Julius Caesar, or the power each of them represented is moot, because Cleopatra's first love, until her death, is Egypt.

The welfare of Egypt is her most profound personal interest, an interest which easily outweighs her sexual autonomy. Until she meets Antony, Cleopatra regards bartering her sexuality -- and her feelings -- for Egyptian freedom as part of the political game. Cleopatra chastises Charmian's for comparing her relationship with Julius Caesar to her relationship with Antony, replying, "My salad days,/ When I was green in judgement, cold in blood,/ To say as I said then" (1.5.73-75). During her relationship with Caesar, the "coldness" of Cleopatra's blood indicates that her level of romantic or sexual interest in Caesar cannot compare to "heat" she experiences in her relationship with Antony, implying that if her interest in Caesar wasn't overwhelmingly romantic or sexual (as it is with Antony), maybe she had other (political) reasons for furthering the relationship.

Certainly there's no evidence that Cleopatra loved anyone other than the Roman general she was currently

seducing, but still, her act of executive sacrifice would be esteemed even in Rome -- if they thought of Cleopatra as a leader rather than "a morsel"(1.5.30) of "fine Egyptian cookery"(2.6.63) which Julius Caesar "[g]rew fat" in "feasting" (2.6.65) upon, or simply a "whore" (3.6.67). Indeed, this is just the sort of sacrifice that Caesar expects of Antony. While Rome is threatened by Pompey, Caesar admonishes Antony for putting his own pleasures and interests -- Cleopatra -- above his duty to his country. Caesar admonishes an absent Antony to "Leave thy lascivious wassails" (1.4.56) with Cleopatra. He encourages Antony to "Let his shames quickly/ Drive him to Rome. 'Tis time we twain/ Did show ourselves i'th'field" (1.4.72-74), saying "Pompey/ Thrives in our idleness" (1.4.75-76), and blaiming this "idleness" on Antony.

But I'm wary of drawing much of a connection between Cleopatra and any patriarchal leader. Cleopatra is not, like Fulvia, simply a female leader of a patriarchal force; Egypt is no patriarchy. Egypt is a place where the distinctions between masculine and feminine, so important to patriarchy's maintenance of a gender-based hierarchy that glorifies men by subjugating women, seem to fade into each other. When in Egypt, Romans consistently confuse Cleopatra and Antony. This gender confusion commences early in the play in an exchange between Enobarbus and Charmain. Enobarbus, Antony's closest confidante, mistakes Cleopatra's approach for

Antony's, telling Cleopatra's Egyptian attendants, "Hush, here comes Antony." (1.2.75). Cleopatra's female Egyptian attendant corrects Enobarbus saying, "Not he, the Queen" (1.2.75). One would think that the closest friend of a warrior so huge and powerful he's compared to Hercules would be able to distinguish the "Herculean Roman['s]" (1.3.84) gait from that of a woman. But in Egypt, senses are deceptive, especially as they apply to gender distinctions.

And what of Cleopatra's attendants? Though she has none of the political sycophants and assorted advisors which surround each Roman general, she is constantly accompanied by a group of servants, who, by occasionally providing Cleopatra with advice (Charmian, especially), act as the Roman council's Egyptian counterparts. But whereas no woman would be allowed to occupy a space at a Roman war council, Cleopatra's advisors are comprised of both men and woman, and even a eunuch, further distinguishing the ways gender operates in Egypt from those in Rome. Gender isn't a means to oppress in Egypt, because the patriarchal distinctions between genders aren't in operation. Even Octavius Caesar observes this Egyptian gender rule, saying of Antony's behavior in Egypt,

> From Alexandria
> This is the news: he [Antony] fishes, drinks, wastes
> The lamps of night in revel; is not more manlike
> Than Cleopatra, nor the queen of Ptolemy
> More womanly than he;
> (1.4.3-7)

Caesar is trying to insult Antony here, by suggesting he's like a woman. Regardless of Caesar's intentions, however, he has struck precisely the Egyptian gender mutability that consistently describes Cleopatra's political mastery over a line of Roman generals.

Cleopatra, as the ruler of Egypt, has great influence in creating and altering the cultural codes to which she and her nation are subject. The extent of her manipulation of patriarchal codes, such as gender, to which Enobarbus is accustomed greatly affects him. Having been spooked by her gender-shifting once, and awed by her mastery over the sensory world from his first glimpse of her sailing down the Nile on her Royal barge, Enobarbus observes that her complete control over her environment lies in her ability to manipulate appearances. He says of Cleopatra's use of passionate, emotional outbursts as a way to manipulate Antony, "We cannot call/ her winds and waters sighs and tears: they are greater/ storms and tempests than almanacs can report. This/ cannot be cunning in her; if it be, she makes a shower of/ rain as well as love" (1.2.144-147). In Egypt, Cleopatra's manipulative outbursts are, indeed, the "storms and tempests" that can influence the political status and cultural codes of the nation. And as Enobarbus playfully remarks, Cleopatra's performances are so powerful that, if she is indeed acting -- as both he and Antony clearly think she is -- then perhaps she could create weather events, so

well she affects an attitude of love.

Later in the play, Enobarbus addresses Cleopatra's ability to manipulate appearances in a more serious, almost awestruck manner, endowing her with an almost supernatural control over both culture and nature. Indeed, he describes more a goddess than a woman when he recounts Cleopatra's appearance on her barge. He paints a picture for Agrippa:

> For her own person,
> It beggared all description: she did lie
> In her pavilion, cloth-of-gold-of-tissue,
> O'erpicturing that Venus where we see
> The fancy outwork nature.
> (2.2.198-202)

I'm tempted to read this passage as suggesting that Cleopatra's mastery of sensory appearances, her art, outdoes the nature which it so perfectly imitates. But Barbara Bono, in her book Literary Transvaluations warns me to think other wise. She writes in regard to the above passage,

> Enobarbus...implies [Cleopatra's] ability to translate her identification with Venus from purely sensual to anagogic ends: in her self-conscious staging here, she is not Plato's derogatory imitation of an imitation, but a living neo-Platonic intimation of a spiritual realm shining through and beyond nature: "O'erpicturing that Venus where we see/ The fancy outwork nature." (Bono 173)

Cleopatra's ability to manipulate sensory appearances in order to appear splendid and beautiful isn't simply an imitation of the beauty we see created in nature or in Plato's realm of the ideal beauty. Cleopatra's beauty essentially debunks both nature and Plato's law of ideal forms by transcending natural beauty, wresting ideal beauty from its spiritual realm to the eyes of her people. Indeed,

Enobarbus remarks on Cleopatra's transcendent superiority over nature, saying that after Cleopatra's people left Antony sitting alone in the market place in order to watch the approach of their queen, he sat "Whistling to th'air; which, but for vacancy,/ Had gone to look at Cleopatra too,/And made a gap in nature" (2.2.217-219). Cleopatra's goddess-like, unearthly beauty so outstrips terrestrial nature that, had not everyone else been crowded around Cleopatra, Enobarbus suggests that her transcendent presence would have commanded the air's gaze, thus making "a gap" in nature and collapsing earthly reality. With that sort of ultimate command over Egyptian nature, it's no wonder Cleopatra can distort merely culturally-created gender distinctions in Egypt.

Enobarbus further describes Cleopatra's goddess-like ability to alter nature in Egypt, saying that "Age cannot wither her" (2.2.236), and that the "vilest things/ Become themselves in her/ that the holy priests/ Bless her when she is riggish" (2.2.239-241). Cleopatra seems to outwit nature itself in that her beauty remains undiminished as she ages. She is so charismatic and powerful that she performs the metaphysical impossibility of uniting opposites within her own form: even the most lewd, "vile" behavior becomes acceptable and, indeed, divine when performed by Cleopatra -- so exquisite that "holy priests" commend her rudest actions.

Cleopatra herself seems to think she's powerful enough

to alter the very nature of truth when confronted with the news that Antony has married Octavia. In reply to her poor messenger's bad news, she says "Say 'tis not so, a province I will give thee,/ And make thy fortunes proud" (2.5.68-69). As Jonathan Dollimore says in his article "Shakespeare, Cultural Humanism, Feminism and Marxist Humanism," Cleopatra thinks that her power is so far-reaching that she can throw "money at history, trying to bribe it into a change of mind" (Dollimore 488). Cleopatra imagines she can change the fact that Antony has married Octavia by simply bribing the messenger to tell her that he lied about Antony's marriage.

Maybe Cleopatra isn't too far askew in thinking she can change the truth just by altering the message. The messenger is in Egypt, and just as Egypt seems to conform to Cleopatra's wishes, people who enter Egypt are, likewise, subject to Cleopatra. When in Egypt, even the Romans seem to do as the Egyptians tell them to. Even Antony lets Cleopatra "put (her) tires and mantles on him" (2.5.22) -- lets her dress him up in women's clothing -- while she wears "his sword Philippan" (2.5.23), the ultimate image of gender-category mutability as manipulated by the goddess-like Cleopatra.

Thus, the patriarchy Cleopatra defies isn't Egyptian, but foreign, Roman in origin. And Roman law as it's portrayed in Antony and Cleopatra -- as well as in all of Shakespeare's Roman tragedies -- is undoubtedly patriarchal,

and undoubtedly different from Egyptian culture. Aside from Fulvia (and to some extent Coriolanus's Volumnia), who bears strong resemblance to Cleopatra by existing outside the domestic sphere, exerting political and social influence over her country, Shakespeare's other female Roman characters remain strictly confined to the domestic sphere. Indeed, Julius Caesar's Portia and Coriolanus's Virgilia both seem to never leave the house. Roman women are considered the possessions of their male counterparts: Titus Andronicus is as confident of his right to give Lavinia to Saturninus -- killing one of his sons in order to defend this right -- as Octavian Caesar is sure of his ability to "bequeath" (2.2.150) his sister Octavia to Antony. If we had any doubt that female sexuality is commodified in Rome, then we need only listen to what Enobarbus says to Antony upon learning of Fulvia's death:

> When it pleaseth their deities to take the wife of a man from him, it shows to man the tailors of the earth; comforting therein, that when old robes are worn out, there are members to make new....
> (1.2.159-162)

By informing Antony, in words eerily similar to Troilus's speech about Helen, that his grief over Fulvia should be "crowned with consolation," because the death of his "old smock" allows him to concentrate on his "new petticoat," Cleopatra, Enobarbus manages to both objectify and commodify women. The woman who is dead, and thus, of no more use to Antony, is an old rag. This being the case, Antony should

take advantage of his new situation, since, as Enobarbus says, his "new petticoat" is "a wonderful piece of work" (1.2.150-151).

Rome's strict, hierarchical, patriarchal order forces Cleopatra into a precarious political position, primarily because the Romans refuse to acknowledge a woman as the leader of a nation. Caesar, prior to his occupation of Egypt at the end of the play, refuses to see her as a political force, referring to Cleopatra not as Queen of Egypt, but as "Queen of Ptolemy" (1.4.6); Caesar acknowledges only her dead husband's claim on the throne, not Cleopatra's. Cleopatra realizes she must exert a masculine force in her relations with Rome in order to persuade them to acknowledge her claims of leadership. At the same time, she employs a strategy of seduction in which she uses all her feminine attributes to political advantage. How exactly does Cleopatra manage to strike this perfect balance of masculine/feminine persona in her relationship with Rome? She barters her feminine sexual attributes, but strictly on her own terms.

Cleopatra sees Roman attitudes toward women as temporarily beneficial to her. Recognizing that Rome values women only for their sexuality and child-bearing capacities, Cleopatra, like Cressida, initially "buys" into the Roman system that commodifies her by exploiting her sexuality to her political advantage. As Engels suggests, Cleopatra's

exploitation of her marketable assets is not unusual; it's a tactic that women in pre-capitalist and capitalist societies employ in order to gain some benefit or advantage from their patriarchal commodification. Cleopatra recognizes her potential to influence and transform "The triple pillar of the world" (1.1.12), Antony himself, by drawing him into an emotional and sexual relationship. The trick of this gender game is to sell her sexuality, playing to the Roman conception of the wily, lascivious feminine sexuality in need of patriarchal control, while remaining completely in control of the exchange and its returns -- remaining the master, and thus -- in Rome's terms -- the man in the exchange.

An example of Cleopatra using these tactics to her advantage is her first encounter with Antony. When Antony first arrives in Egypt, Cleopatra recognizes that she must draw him utterly into her world in order to properly seduce and manipulate him to her advantage -- she must bring him onto her turf. Thus, she refuses his invitation to dinner at his place, replying that "It should be better he became her guest" (2.2.222). Then Cleopatra engineers the great barge scene, a scene that both reveals her as a powerful force and shows off her incredibly attractive feminine attributes. Her careful maneuvering of Antony into a unbalanced power dynamic upon their first meeting assures Cleopatra's control. Once he's properly seduced, Cleopatra continues to control Antony through emotional manipulation: as Enobarbus tells us,

"Cleopatra, catching the least noise" (1.2.137) of something Antony has done of which she disapproves, "dies instantly" (1.2.138). Indeed, Enobarbus has "seen her die twenty times" (1.2.138) in order to gain some advantage or benefit. Cleopatra influences Antony's actions, and thus, Rome, by keeping him totally emotionally involved in their relationship.

Cressida was aware that she could exploit her sexuality for personal advantage, but Cleopatra is the master of the strategy. She has employed it successfully for some time. She previously "made great (Julius) Caesar lay his sword to bed" (2.2.228), and has been a "fragment/ Of Gneius Pompey's" (3.13.118) in order to insure her nation's survival during Rome's occupation of Egypt. And her tactic seems to have worked considering that Egypt has remained intact through Pompey, Julius Caesar, and the Antony/Octavius combination. Indeed, as a disgruntled Octavian Caesar reports from Rome, Cleopatra's affair with Antony has proved most lucrative to her politically, as Antony has returned "the stablishment of Egypt" (3.6.9) to her, making her "Absolute queen" (3.6.11).

Cleopatra benefits from exploiting her sexuality, but in "buying" into the system that oppresses her, Cleopatra, like Cressida, neither defies nor alters that system. Cleopatra can't control any situation that extends beyond the boundaries of her nation, and the Romans don't recognize her bartering of her sexuality for personal and national

advantage as political strategy on her part. Instead, they attribute Cleopatra's interest in Antony's "captain's heart" (1.1.6) as simply a means to "cool" her voracious "gypsy's lust" (1.1.10). Cleopatra is "to Philo a 'gypsy and 'strumpet'; to Pompey, a bewitching, sensual temptress; to Maecenas and Agrippa, a magnificent sex object and a 'trull'; to Scarrus, "yon ribauded nag of Egypt'; and to Antony himself, when he fears she has betrayed him, a 'kite,' 'boggler,' 'foul Egyptian,' 'triple-turn'd whore,' 'false soul of Egypt,' 'right gypsy,' and 'spell' (Bono 161); not a single Roman regards her as the brilliant and powerful ruler of a nation. In addition, Cleopatra's inability to see love and sex as anything but means to an end prevents her from establishing a truly loving relationship with Antony.

In a exchange similar to the one where Juliet says that her love is unmeasurable in reply to Romeo's request that she measure it, Cleopatra asks Antony that if their love "be love indeed, tell me how much" (1.1.14). Antony replies, like Juliet, that his love for her would indeed be diminished if he could assign it a value, saying "There's a beggary in love that can be reckoned" (1.1.15). Cleopatra presses him further, demanding that he give her some sort of tangible expression of the extent of his love. She says, "I'll set a bourn how far to be beloved" (1.1.16), to which Antony replies "Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth" (1.1.17). Ironically, it is Antony who first realizes that he

and Cleopatra might indeed need a "new heaven" and "new earth" in order to fully experience love. Their current society, which pushes Cleopatra into commodifying herself in order to insure both her survival and the survival of her nation, makes it impossible for Antony and Cleopatra to experience a love untainted by political implications.

But Cleopatra eventually rejects Cressida's solution for Juliet's; she chooses real love over further sexual bartering of herself for political advantage. She chooses a love that "transcends" the world of politics (Dollimore 486). Cleopatra gets to show us that she does indeed love Antony, and that her affair with him is not purely political when she refuses to barter Antony to Caesar in exchange for personal advantage. In addition, Caesar demonstrates that he does regard the Queen as a rather shrewd political leader. The tables are turned for Caesar and Antony, when, instead of bartering a woman between them, Antony himself is set up for barter between Caesar and Cleopatra. Caesar sets up the bargain, saying "The Queen/ Of audience nor desire shall fail, so she/ From Egypt drive her all-disgraced friend/ Or take his life there" (3.7.21-24). He says further that "This if she perform,/ She shall not sue unheard" (3.7.24-25). In other words, if she murders or betrays her lover, she will be in good favor with Rome. Cleopatra refuses Caesar's offer, and in choosing to follow Juliet's path instead of Cressida's, leaves a patriarchal system in which female

commodification prevents the establishment of egalitarian, love-based relationships, to enter the "new heaven, new earth" (1.1.17) where she and Antony can experience true, eternal love, and, indeed, "new life" (Coppedge 41).

Ironically, Cleopatra, in refusing Caesar's offer to barter Antony, abdicates the only consistently patriarchal position she's occupied during the play. She refuses to continue the patriarchally respected sacrifice of self for the betterment of country. Antony marries Octavia, thus temporarily sacrificing his "pleasure" "I'th'East" (2.3.40) for a "marriage" of "peace" (2.3.39) with Octavia. Antony is praised for this action by the Romans; it almost makes up for his prior irresponsible behavior in Egypt, where he temporarily let his country down for his own selfish pleasures. When Cleopatra is offered, essentially, the same bargain by Caesar, she refuses. What's more, after Antony commits suicide, Caesar seems to threaten her with "the destruction" of her "children" (5.2.131-132) if she takes "Antony's course"(5.2.130) and kills herself. But Cleopatra, for the first time, refuses to oblige. She chooses responsibility to herself over responsibility to her country, and by doing so, abdicates the patriarchal power position occupied by Ulysses and Caesar alike -- one that advocates love of country over love of self or anyone else (Theweleit 63).

Though Cleopatra's love-choice does not completely alter

the social system which oppresses her, as Juliet's suicide does, it lets her strike Roman patriarchy a deft blow. In killing herself, and thus denying Caesar the chance " to hoist (her) up/ And show (her) to the shouting varletry/ Of censuring Rome" (5.2.55-57), Cleopatra disrupts Caesar's final triumph, and, indeed, a Roman tradition (as we've seen from Titus Andronicus's displaying of Tamora and her children): she doesn't allow Caesar to display her and her children as possessions of Roman conquest. Cleopatra's death has an edge over Juliet's death, and indeed, over Cressida's life: while it doesn't completely deconstruct Roman patriarchy, it is a personal victory over patriarchal ideology. Her refusal to continue occupying a patriarchal position of self-sacrifice allows her to experience a death that seems more a beginning than an end -- a death that, in reuniting her with Antony, restores her to love. Juliet and Romeo's deaths may have allowed them temporary triumph over class-based patriarchy by sending Verona's patrilineage into turmoil, but still, the ending of the play **feels** tragic -- certainly there "never was a story of more woe/ Than this of Juliet and her Romeo" (5.3.309-310). Juliet and Romeo may have realized that love-based marriage cannot exist in a female-commodifying, pre-capitalist society, but, for me, their tragedy lies in the fact that their deaths have prevented them from finding a place where they could experience and revel in true love. Whereas Romeo and Juliet's

deaths are treated as a tragic end, Antony and Cleopatra's deaths seem only a beginning. Walter R. Coppedge compares the two sets of suicides in his article "The Joy of the Worm: Dying in Antony and Cleopatra":

> Romeo and Juliet die in the Capulets' monument; Shakespeare's middle-aged lovers, in Cleopatra's. Where the earlier play ends in the next day's glooming peace, the radiant finale of the latter tragedy is set in the heavens. (Coppedge 50)

Realizing that she must enter a "new heaven, new earth" (1.1.17) -- a place free from patriarchal, female-commodifying, pre-capitalist dogma -- in order to experience a love-based marriage, Cleopatra kills herself so that Antony can be her "bridegroom" (4.14.100) in a death that is only a beginning.

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